**Career Resources**

*Introduction*

The 2007 GCI contained an extensive section on career resources for graduate and professional students and their partners. It argued for a two-pronged focus: assist students and partners with their career needs while in Ithaca, and then assist with the transition into the workplace after graduation. While offering a clear list of seven concrete recommendations, it noted that in general, existing career resources for research doctoral students were often focused only on academia as the only path. Furthermore, it identified as an obstacle the fact that the Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Life was the only office specifically charged with assisting graduate students.

We wish to commend the remarkable and sustained progress in this area made since 2007. In September 2011, the Graduate School inaugurated the new Office of Inclusion and Professional Development with the hiring of Associate Dean Sheri Notari and Assistant Dean Tilman Baumstark. Since that time, this office has engaged in focused development of new resources, as well as consolidation of existing resources, to assist graduate students specifically in both academic and non-academic professional development. At this same time, a significant gap in programming was addressed with the hiring of Anne Poduska as the Graduate and International Career Advisor within Cornell Career Services.

Nevertheless, there remain significant opportunities for improvement in the area of career resources for graduate and professional students at Cornell, as outlined in the four objectives below.

**Objective 1: Support graduate students who choose to pursue non-academic careers.**

*Rationale:* Professional students, by definition, prepare themselves in their programs to enter a non-academic field, whether business, law, or veterinary medicine. Many professional masters degree students in the Graduate School similarly prepare themselves for a non-academic career. But, an increasing number of research graduate students are looking for a non-academic profession beyond graduate school. This trend is reflected in the rising number of Ph.D’s who work for the private sector or government instead of as a faculty member in an academic institution[[1]](#footnote-1). As this trend continues, Cornell University needs to be at the cutting edge in providing career resources for the growing population of the graduate community looking for a non-academic career.

Actions:

1. Encourage faculty to take non-academic careers seriously by asking Directors of Graduate Studies to prepare themselves to provide support for their students who choose a non-academic career.
2. Increase opportunities for networking with alumni [see also Objective 4]
3. Increased interaction opportunities with professionals in non-academic careers, beyond those who are Cornell alumni.
4. Support graduate and professional students in their desire to explore all career possibilities, without jeopardizing their commitment to a particular one.
5. Organize an annual on-campus career fair dedicated to graduate and professional students.
6. Support the creation of graduate and professional student communities around particular career interests, but across fields.
7. Provide incentives and support for interdepartmental collaboratives like AguaClara, SMART, or SGE in the Johnson School, that create working relationships between a variety of graduate and professional students from both academic and non-academic focused graduate programs.
8. Facilitate student networking, collaborations, and professional development between Ithaca graduate and professional programs and Weill Cornell Medical College programs.

**Objective 2: Continue to make Cornell Career Services more accessible to and valuable for graduate and professional students**

*Rationale:* In the 2007 GCI, the GPSA offered a vision for a comprehensive career resource center that would synthesize a variety of career resource initiatives for graduate students and their partners. The document stated the need for an increased level of resources focused on academic careers as well as non-academic careers. The GPSA also called for an expansion of career advice for international students and domestic students looking for international careers. The University responded by creating the position of Graduate and International Career Advisor in Career Services, which serves a large number of graduate students and international students who were previously not offered career services. While this position is a welcome addition to the various career resources on campus, this single staff member alone serves thousands of graduate (and undergraduate) students, a number too large for these services to truly be open to all who want them. Additionally, the University has expanded the career service offerings for graduate and professional student partners who relocate to Ithaca. This is a particular challenge to the nearly 25% of graduate and professional students who are married and the other countless students who bring their partners to Ithaca. Given the challenges of the economy and limited job opportunities in the region, this particular problem is of major concern to graduate and professional students and was identified in the 2007 GCI as a major issue.

Actions:

1. Expand support for graduate student career advising, providing additional resources each year including staff, money for programs, in-kind support from other units, and an expanded range of expertise.
2. Continue to improve and centralize communication tools for reaching graduate and professional students.
3. Expand career services offerings for student partners and have career service staff on campus that are open year round to advise student partners.
4. The Graduate School and the professional schools should collect data, where possible and appropriate, on student partners and track job placements for those partners who are looking for jobs in Ithaca or the region and use these numbers to evaluate career services for student partners.
5. Continue to promote and improve existing resources, like VersatilePhD.
6. Improve CCNet to better serve graduate and professional student needs.
7. Work toward equality of offerings, regardless of home college or programming; sharing of best practices.
8. Supplement undergraduate offerings that are also appropriate for graduate students.

**Objective 3: Support the development of transferable professional skills.**

*Rationale:* The GPSA believes that graduate and professional school can be productively viewed as the acquisition of a series of core competencies. Though there are clearly field-specific competencies, there also exist many which transcend disciplinary boundaries such as public speaking, maintaining a project budget, and interpersonal relationship building. Given the varying ability of fields and programs to offer professional development workshops, it is logical to identify areas of commonality where consolidation will be effective. The Graduate School and each professional school orientations are useful events where these workshops can be advertised and actually started.

Actions:

1. Offer general workshops, focusing on skills that are applicable to all fields, for example: writing for a non-technical audience, effective resume writing and networking skills[[2]](#footnote-2).
2. Focus on *dependable* and *recurring* programming.
3. Provide resources for DGSs, both to support their own field programming as well as to make students in their field aware of the Graduate School offerings.
4. Continue to improve the Graduate School Orientation by increasing retention during the day-long activities and increasing the number of cross-departmental connections as this is often the only time in a student’s graduate career when they are all together.

**Objective 4: Increase the level of data collection, both regarding current students and alumni.**

*Rationale:* The level of data collection and analysis varies considerably across colleges and fields. While the Johnson Graduate School of Management tracks their alumni in great detail, other fields may have no organized system of tracking at all. This data collection also varies prior to graduation. The move toward computerized registration and forms provides an opportunity to make sure that students are meeting their milestones in a timely fashion, and to provide targeted assistance where it is most needed.

Actions:

1. The results of the survey instruments implemented by the Graduate School in 2012–13 should be shared as broadly as possible and continued each year. The survey of students who are accepted but choose not to matriculate especially fills a gap.
2. Develop a clearer understanding of what students do after graduation. Currently, some colleges (e.g., Human Ecology, Engineering) have excellent alumni databases, but in other colleges, these are virtually non-existent. Graduation Manager only asks students what they are doing immediately after graduation, but does not track their careers.
3. Track field metrics in order to identify students who may be experiencing trouble. This might include identifying students who are not on track to complete their exams in a timely fashion, or more systemic issues, like a particular advisor whose students routinely miss such deadlines.

1. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0036307](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0036307#abstract0) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Fall 2012 Student Advocacy Committee Town Hall [↑](#footnote-ref-2)